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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN MFA COMMENTS ON SECOND SURVEY OF IRAQ
DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

REF: SECSTATE 4865

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DERSE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Given Azerbaijani officials' repeated statements that GOAJ troops will remain in Iraq "as long as they are needed," we expect that the GOAJ will work with us to find a way to keep troops in Iraq beyond the expiration of the Chapter VII UNSCR. According to MFA Security Affairs Director Galib Israfilov, Azerbaijan would appreciate political/legal justification from the Iraqi Government, preferably in the form of a letter to President Aliyev or Foreign Minister Mammadyarov from the appropriate Government of Iraq counterpart which (a) expressed appreciation for the Azerbaijani contribution to Iraq's security to date; (b) noted specific, concrete areas in which Azerbaijan has contributed to Iraq's security; and (c) requested that, if possible, Azerbaijani troop contributions continue after UNSCR 1790 expires. Azerbaijan's Parliament would need to approve a continued troop presence but, with the appropriate political justification, we do not expect the proposal to face significant debate or opposition. Israfilov also indicated that more positive media coverage of Azerbaijan's contributions in Iraq, as well as a visit to Iraq by DFM Azimov, also would be helpful. Because the MFA's Security Affairs Department has the lead on policy questions related to coalition affairs we believe his view reflects broader GOAJ policy. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) Azerbaijani officials - including President Aliyev - continue to regularly affirm their intention to keep Azerbaijani forces in Iraq "as long as they are needed," as a "sign of political support" for the U.S. Based on this political commitment, as well as the perceived boost that the GOAJ believes its role in our global counterterrorism efforts has given its political profile, we expect that the GOAJ will keep its 151 troops in Iraq beyond the expiration of the Chapter VII UNSCR. However, based on recent comments by Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov (septel), we do not believe the GOAJ is willing at this time to commit more troops to Iraq. As DFM Azimov told the Ambassador, President Aliyev seeks "wider and increased public attention from the U.S. on our security cooperation" and "wants to be recognized as a security contributor." Azimov suggested that President Aliyev would need "this type of support" which would help provide a solid public rationale to explain why Azerbaijan is putting more troops into Iraq when others, like Poland, are pulling them out, before making a decision on DoD DAS Cagan's request that Azerbaijan send more troops to Iraq.

¶3. (S) On January 22, poloff discussed reftel points with Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs Security Affairs

Department Director Galib Israfilov. (Israfilov is Azimov's deputy, who oversees Azerbaijani support for Coalition operations and political-military cooperation with the U.S.) Israfilov thanked poloff for the briefing and asked for the USG's assessment of the Iraqi forces and if they would be ready to assume more security control. Drawing on reftel talking point, poloff noted that while significant progress has been made, it would be important for foreign troops to remain in Iraq. Israfilov noted that he had heard in the media that there was a possibility of Arab or other Muslim countries joining the coalition. Poloff said that he had not seen these reports, but said that the USG was working hard to increase Arab political support in Iraq.

14. (S) Turning to the political and legal conditions that would be necessary for Azerbaijan to continue in the coalition, Israfilov noted that Azerbaijan participating as a third-party to the U.S.-Iraq Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) seemed sensible, but quickly noted there would have to be a political justification which legitimized Azerbaijan's continued presence in the coalition. To date this political/legal justification had been various Security Council resolutions, which were followed by annual review/approval by the Azerbaijani Parliament. Israfilov said that it would be very helpful, from a political standpoint, if the Azerbaijani President or Foreign Minister would receive a letter from the appropriate Government of Iraq counterpart which (a) expressed appreciation for the Azerbaijani contribution to Iraq's security to date; (b) noted specific, concrete areas in which Azerbaijan has contributed to Iraq's security; and (c) requested that, if possible, Azerbaijani troop contributions continue after UNSCR 1790 expires. Israfilov said that, in general, positive media coverage, from the side of the Iraqi

government praising Azerbaijan, would be well-received in Baku. Israfilov did not indicate any possibility that Azerbaijan was considering leaving the coalition or reducing its troop presence in Iraq.

15. (S) Israfilov also noted that the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the political and legal questions surrounding Azerbaijan's Iraq deployment. (Comment: There is a fairly healthy rivalry between the Azerbaijani MFA and Ministry of Defense on such international security questions.) He noted that there had also been talk about Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov traveling to Iraq to visit Azerbaijani troops and to see their work first hand, and to talk with Iraqi government officials. Israfilov indicated that Azimov would be interested in the U.S. helping to arrange such a trip. We will follow up on this possibility.

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